

ENCOUNTERING EVIL: SUFFERING IN THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

REL 140-3/4

(3) Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 – 10:50 a.m. / Chapel 115

(4) Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 – 1:50 a.m. / Chapel 116

Office Hours: M/W/F 10–12 / Humanities 307–D

<http://personal-pages.lvc.edu/sayers/classes.html>

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DESCRIPTION

This class challenges students to engage The Problem of Evil, the dilemma posed by simultaneously believing in a benevolent deity and the existence of human suffering. Our frame will be three religions with radically different approaches to understanding human suffering: Christianity, Hinduism (particularly the monist perspective exemplified by Advaita Vedanta), and Zoroastrianism. Using these three archetypes we will explore the variety of responses to human suffering; we will become familiar with three of the world's oldest religions and their responses to human suffering, which will illuminate the responses of other religions to the existence of evil.

The course is divided roughly in two; the first half is dedicated to surveys of the three religious traditions, the second to their responses to human suffering. In the end we will also briefly look at the problem of evil in literature.

This class has a Foreign Studies designation with respect to the General Education curriculum. As such this course intends to increase students' global awareness by introducing them to an important aspect of Asian culture in order to foster an understanding of cultural, social, political, religious, and/or economic systems outside the European tradition.

TEXTS

REQUIRED TEXTS:

(Vicchio): *The Voice from the Whirlwind*, Stephen Vicchio

Ivan and Adolf: The Last Man in Hell, Stephen Vicchio

(Knipe): *Hinduism*, David M. Knipe

(Ferguson): *Christian Thought: An Introduction*, Marianne Ferguson

You will need a copy of the Bible (various translations encouraged)

Other Class Readings are available on Blackboard.

EVALUATION

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION are crucial to your success in this class. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. You will be allowed three absences throughout the semester. Any absences in excess of this will directly affect your grade. You will be expected not only to have read all assigned readings by the class period, but also to have reflected upon them. Participation can be as easy as asking for clarification on a concept, or as challenging as trying to engage the instructor directly on the relevance of the material to your everyday life. Participation is the best way to ensure you understand the material, and that is the best way to ensure you do well in the class.

There will be one SHORT QUIZ, which will assess your knowledge of the Hinduism section of the course. The quiz will be composed of multiple choice and short answer questions. This will be

the best indicator for how well you are absorbing the material, and how well you will do on the exams and essays. The Short Quiz will be on September 11th.

ESSAY ONE will give you the opportunity to develop the ability to express the ideas you have learned in class in writing. This assignment is to be two pages in length. (Two normal size sheets with default Word margins with 12 pt font.) For this essay you must select one theodicy, then describe it and argue briefly about whether it successfully answers the problem of Evil. Essay One will be due at the beginning of class on November 4th.

The MID-TERM EXAMINATION will assess your knowledge of the material covered in the first half of the class. The Exam will be mainly short answer with one or two short essays. The Mid-Term Exam will be on October 9th.

In ESSAY TWO you will need to demonstrate your ability to present an argument. The topics for essay two will be chosen later in the semester. This assignment is five pages in length. (Five normal size sheets with default Word margins with 12 pt font.) Essay Two will be due at the beginning of class on December 3rd.

The FINAL EXAMINATION will assess your knowledge of *all* the material covered in class. The Exam will be short answer and short essays. The Final Exam for section 3 will be held on Thursday December 11th from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and for section 4 on Friday December 11th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Various aspects of performance will be weighted as listed below:

Attendance and Class Participation	10%	Mid-Term Examination	20%
Short Quiz	10%	Essay Two	25%
Essay One	10%	Final Examination	25%

POLICIES

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

“Lebanon Valley College expects its students to uphold the principles of academic honesty. Violations of these principles will not be tolerated. A student shall neither hinder nor unfairly assist the efforts of other students to complete their work. All individual work that a student produces and submits as a course assignment must be the student’s own. Cheating and plagiarism are acts of academic dishonesty. Cheating is an act that deceives or defrauds. It includes, but is not limited to, looking at another's exam or quiz, using unauthorized materials during an exam or quiz, colluding on assignments without the permission or knowledge of the instructor, and furnishing false information for the purpose of receiving special consideration, such as postponement of an exam, essay, quiz or deadline of an oral presentation. Plagiarism is the act of submitting as one’s own the work (the words, ideas, images, or compositions) of another person or persons without accurate attribution. Plagiarism can manifest itself in various ways: it can arise from sloppy note-taking; it can emerge as the incomplete or incompetent citation of resources; it can take the form of the wholesale submission of other people’s work as one’s own, whether from an online, oral or printed source. The seriousness of an instance of plagiarism—its *moral* character as an act of academic dishonesty—normally depends on the extent to which a student intends to deceive and mislead the reader as to the authorship of the work in question. Initially, the instructor will make this determination.” (From LVC’s Undergraduate Academic Regulations and Procedures: <http://www.lvc.edu/catalog/acad-reg-procedures.aspx?bhiw=1024>)

Details on plagiarism and how to avoid it can also be found at this site:

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_plagiarism.php

You will be held responsible for understanding what is and what is not plagiarism. I will not give anyone a second chance on this issue.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

If you have a physical, medical, psychological, or learning disability that is going to impact your attendance or require accommodation, please let me know. In order to ensure that your learning needs are appropriately met, you will need to provide documentation of your disability or medical condition to the Director of Disability Services in Humanities 206-D, 867-6071. The Office of Disability Services will then provide a letter of verification of disability that describes the accommodations needed for this class.

ABSENCE FOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:

If you must miss class for the observance of a religious holy day, inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence. Notice given at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates the student will be absent will constitute an excused absence. For religious holy days that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, notice should be given on the first day of the semester.

SYLLABUS:

The syllabus is a tentative schedule and is subject to change as the need arises students will be made aware of any changes with enough time to adequately prepare for class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One:

(Aug. 26): Introduction

Miner, Horace. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema." *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956), 503–507. [to be read in class]

(Aug. 28): Hinduism

Knipe, 1–24

Week Two:

(Sep. 2): Hinduism

Knipe, 25–46

(Sep. 4): Hinduism

Knipe, 47–74

Week Three: **(Short Quiz on Sep. 11)**

(Sep. 9): Hinduism

Knipe, 75–118

(Sep. 11): Zoroastrianism

Malandra, 3–31

Week Four:

(Sep. 16): Zoroastrianism

Skjærvø, 1–36

(Sep. 18): Zoroastriansim

Skjærvø, 37–68

Week Five:

(Sep. 23): Christianity

Ferguson, 9–30

(Sep. 25): Christianity

Ferguson, 31–70

Week Six:

(Sep. 30): Christianity

Ferguson, 71–90

(Oct. 2): Christianity

Ferguson, 91–118

Week Seven: **(Mid Term on Oct. 9)**

(Oct. 7): Mid-term Review

(Oct. 9): Mid-term Exam

Week Eight:

- (Oct. 14): No Class, Fall Break
- (Oct. 16): The Problem of Evil and Theodicies
Vicchio, 1–33

Week Nine:

- (Oct. 21): The Problem and its Terms
Vicchio, 45–76
- (Oct. 23): Theodicies Analyzed
Vicchio, 85–116

Week Ten:

- (Oct. 28): Theodicies Analyzed (continued)
Vicchio, 116–152
- (Oct. 30): Religions of Dissolution: Hinduism
Bowker 193–236: “Hinduism,” from *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*

Week Eleven: **(Essay One due on Nov. 4)**

- (Nov. 4): Religions of Solution: Zoroastrianism
Bowker, 269–291: “Dualism, Duality and the Unification of Experience,”
from *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*
- (Nov. 6): Religions of Paradox: Old Testament
Genesis: 1–3, 15; Numbers: 16:28f; Proverbs: 24:19f, 10:27f; Psalms: 37:16f;
II Kings 21:5f, 21:10–13; Jeremiah 4:23f, 121f, 20:7–9, 31:31–33;
Ecclesiastes 8:10–14, 9:2f, 9:11f; Daniel 12:1–4

Week Twelve:

- (Nov. 11): Religions of Paradox: Job
Job (whole book)
- (Nov. 13): Religions of Paradox: Job
Vicchio, 161–198

Week Thirteen:

- (Nov. 18): Religions of Paradox: New Testament
Mark 6:34; Matthew 9:36; Luke 13:34; Luke 17:26–30; Matthew 24:37–41;
Mark 2:1–12; Luke 13:3–5; John 9:1–5; Luke 7:33; John 10:20; Mark 3:22–
26; Luke 6:20–49; John 3:1–21; John 9:1–3
- (Nov. 20): Theodicy and Literature: Anger
Dostoevsky, 7–18, “Rebellion” from *The Brothers Karamozov*
Ivan and Adolf: The Last Man in Hell

Week Fourteen:

- (Nov. 25): Final Exam Review
- (Nov. 27): No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Week Fifteen: **(Essay Two Due Dec. 3)**

(Dec. 2): Theodicy and Literature: *The Plague*
The Plague

(Dec. 4): Theodicy and Literature: *The Plague*
The Plague

Final Exam:

Section 3: **Thursday December 11th 2:00–5:00 p.m.**

Section 4: **Friday December 11th 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.**